

Minutes of: EMPLOYMENT PANEL

Date of Meeting: 4 February 2025

Present: Councillor T Rafiq (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, J Grimshaw, C Cummins, E Moss,
M Walsh, T Tariq and J Lancaster

Also in attendance:

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L Smith

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 SPONSORSHIP POLICY & AMENDMENTS TO THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

Sam McVaigh presented the Sponsorship Policy and Amendments to the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

The policy confirms the Council's position to continue to provide sponsorship for Social Workers, owing to the significant local and national challenge in recruitment here. It also sets out a set of clear criteria for the assessment of other sponsorship applications which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The policy has been developed based on a model policy developed by another Greater Manchester local authority with specialist legal support and has been subject to review by the Council's legal service and shared with Trade Union colleagues.

In relation to a question from Councillor Tariq concerning the number of sponsorship positions at Bury Council compared to across GM it was explained that Bury was one of 3 GM Councils who has a sponsorship licence, the others being Rochdale and Manchester. Manchester supported the most sponsorship positions.

Following a question from Councillor Tariq in relation to the scope of the Council's guaranteed interview schemes, it was explained that there are currently GM wide commitments in relation to disabled people, veterans and care leavers who are guaranteed an interview if the shortlisting criteria was met. The GM Combined authority has funded an accelerated development programme for under represented groups focused on race and disability and the Council is considering options in relation to race. The proposed wording would avoid the need to return to Employment Panel any time there is a new scheme agreed.

Councillor Moss referred to the original number of social workers that had been recruited as 23 reducing to 15 currently in post and asked whether any of the recruited people heading to Bury could have gone elsewhere?

Sam McVaigh explained that the certificates of sponsorship were specific to the employer and were non-transferable. This meant that there was less risk of the sponsored starter going elsewhere.

Councillor Moss asked how the sponsored social workers were settling into their roles and lives in general.

Sam explained that it is inevitably taking the new recruits some time to be carrying a full case-load. They have differing levels of practice experience and it will take them time to adapt to a new culture. They are all at different stages. All of the new starters were performing and being supported appropriately.

Councillor Rafiq asked whether not being able to bring dependents with them had an effect of how they were settling and progressing?

It was reported that the restrictions on bringing Dependents into the country did not apply to the Health and Care visa route so was not an issue. Other sponsored roles going forward may not be exempt.

It was agreed:

1. That the new Sponsorship policy and the revisions to the Recruitment and Selection policy be agreed.
2. That the revised policies go forward for endorsement via the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee before being published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff with the intention to come into force from 1 March 2025.
3. That a review be undertaken and reported back to the Employment Panel in 2 years'.

5 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025 - 2026

Sam McVaigh presented the Pay Policy Statement,

The report set out the Pay Structure, Chief Officer Remuneration, Pay Multiple and Gender Pay Gap.

It was reported that the Gender Pay Gap was back into a positive trajectory.

Councillor Moss referred to the real living wage increase being increased nationally from 23 October but the Council's implementation date was 1st April. Councillor Moss asked whether the Council would be backdating to the October date.

Sam explained that the Real Living Wage Foundation worked closely with Councils and Unions and gave all employers until 1 May to implement the rise. The increase would not be backdated.

Following a question in relation to salary sacrifice schemes, Sam explained that these were opportunities for employees to purchase goods and services direct from their salaries and making savings in relation to tax and contributions such as pensions

It was agreed:

1. That the Employment Panel commend the proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2025-26 for approval by full Council.
2. That the Employment Panel agree the Council's proposed pay structure for 2025-26 as set out within the statement and inclusive of revised non-consolidated pay supplements to retain compliance with the Real Living Wage rate of pay.

6

URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ

Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm)